

## [Letter from Woody Guthrie to Alan Lomax, February 20, 1941]

Dear Alan:

It is raining to beat the devil here and I'm sorry as hell to hear that Back Where I Come From is kicked off of the air. I wired to Nick asking him if I could possibly go back to work and he wired me that it was all off. Too honest again I suppose? Maybe not purty enough. Oh well, this country's a getting to where it caint hear its own voice. Someday the deal will change. I catch myself pretty often setting around thinking just how hard a dam time you must have, trying to get some of our upper crusts to listen to the real thing. I suppose a feller gets to feeling like he'd like to haul off and tell about 47 jillion of them to go to hell but you are too smart to let yourself do it. I never was. But as time goes on, more and more folks are going to get to missing the real old honest to goodness songs and then someday they'll be stumbling around and hear them sung, and they'll say, Boy I like this place, I'm gonna come back so often people'll think by God I live here. Yep. I got awful downhearted about it up there in New York. But it was about an even break Some of the high collar joints I went too just had such a feeling about them that they just drained my crank case. Then you'd go out and sing for a bunch of working people — like the CIO, and they'd holler and roar and yell and raise so much rukus that you just knowed dam well the country was a gonna come out all right in the long run. The rich folks likes to lull their selfs off to sleep and sort of fleat ½ way between a drink of scot liquor and a tile shit house — and listen to a raft of songs that's ab as close to the real as I am to foreclosing on a farm. Hello to all of folks out at the Tower and speak to the Susquehannah for me, too. How Pete? Is he making a tub of money nowadays? He told me last time I s him that he was going to endeavor to straighten himself out financially. I took that to mean that he was short on money. But I couldn't catch ju what he was aiming to do about it. It's still raining here. Fact it has been for 40 days and 40 nights, just enough to make me want

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to build a arc. Like Noah. Raining harder now. Started up like a truck loaded wi potatoes rumbling over a bridge. The reason you want a arc in Southern California is on account of these dammed old tight wad landlords. We been hunting a house since two weeks ago and they just shake their head a ask how many kids you got and the bigger the number you tell them, the faster they shake their head No. Makes you want to take a pocket full of wet cobs and knock big knots on their heads. Just wait. They'll shake their head No just once too often one of these days. There'll be dam ne as many landlords get chased off down the road as their friends that's been unhoused for so long, because all of these kids are having kids and their kids is gonna have some and they'll keep a piling up and a piling up till the tide will turn the other direction. I'm picking up plenty of good material for my book and play. Maybe another book and play. How the hell do I know I can write a book and play? I dam sure know I can play. If I can practice till my writing gets to be my play then you can call any of it a book and any of it a play. Just have it all stocked up you know, and sell it for a book or a play or a movie or just plain old writing. Heard you with the Gates on the School of the air last week telling how Spirituals are made up. Stay in the buggy. Tell the Gates I said stay in their and pitch. Or just stay in pitch. No, they're most general in pitch. This car is hungering and thirsting for payments after righteousness. I've mortally run the tail end off of it and aim to run it plumb off. Hope I dont lose it. I'm trying to get in touch with Eddie Ruskum, Viking Press. Maybe he'll take what part of my book I done got done and pay me some little money to keep the wife and kids a going till I can hack out the of it, I figure 17,000 more single space pages ought to be enough fo to start chopping into. It was just barely getting good. I'd just OVER 2 to where I got married, got into the Superstition Business, left Texas and come to California where I stayed under the bridges. Well, this letter is getting too long. Got to nose her down. Take it easy, but I know you'll take it.

Your friend, Woody Guthrie Woody Guthrie 2-20-1941

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I aint got no right real dependable address yet, but will let you know in a few days. Tell everybody in the American Highdives of the Archives of the Library of Congress hello and goodboye for me.